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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2005

Agenda and programme of work for 2005

The agenda for the substantive session of 2005 of the Committee on Conferences was approved by the Committee at its organizational session, on 23 March 2005, on the basis of a draft agenda proposed by the Secretariat in document A/AC.172/2005/L.1. The approved agenda for the substantive session of 2005 is accordingly issued in the present document, together with annotations regarding the documentation, for the Committee's consideration in 2005. The reporting on most items on the agenda will be included in two comprehensive reports: one on the reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the other on utilization of conference services and other matters regularly reported on under the agenda item entitled "Pattern of conferences".

Agenda for the substantive session of 2005

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:
   - (a) Intersessional departures for 2005 and related matters;
   - (b) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2006-2007;
   - (c) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities:
     - (i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs, and consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;
     - (ii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;
     - (iii) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;
     - (iv) Improved utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa;

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(d) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243;

(e) Consideration of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 2006-2007.

3. Improving the performance of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management:

(a) Integrated global management;

(b) Workload standards and performance measures;

(c) Responsibility and accountability system in documents submission;

(d) Provision of summary records;

(e) Electronic tools and innovative ways and means to provide services to Member States.

4. Translation- and interpretation-related matters.

5. Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007: Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

6. Information technology.

7. Adoption of the report.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings

(a) Intersessional departures for 2005 and related matters

A compilation of such matters will be provided for inclusion in the report of the Committee.

(b) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2006-2007

A draft calendar for the biennium 2006-2007 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 2005.

The Committee will submit to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2006-2007.

(c) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

(i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs, and consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

In section II.A, paragraphs 2 and 3, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to continue to consult with those bodies that have consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their

allocated resources of the past three sessions with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources, and urged the secretariats and bureaux of bodies that underutilize their conference-servicing resources, with assistance from the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the Secretariat, to consider changes to their programme of work, as appropriate, based on previous patterns for recurring agenda items, with a view to making improvements in their utilization factors. It requested the Secretary-General to conduct systematic follow-up regarding the utilization of conference services by those bodies that consistently underutilize their conference-servicing resources over a longer period of time in order to identify the underlying causes for being unable to reach the benchmark.

(ii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In section II.A, paragraphs 15, 18 and 19, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly recognized the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies, and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that, as far as possible, all requests for conference services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States are met. It recalled that meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States are provided with interpretation services on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice. It requested the Secretary-General to review the current established practice concerning the provision of interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States at Headquarters and other duty stations with a view to improving the provision of interpretation services to those meetings.

(iii) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

In section II.A, paragraphs 5 to 10, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly welcomed the efforts that were being made to improve the utilization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. It reiterated its request to the Secretary-General to continue to intensify the marketing efforts being made by the United Nations Office at Nairobi to attract more meetings to its facilities. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that conference management services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi are in line with other duty stations, taking into account the operational requirements of the Office, and to report thereon to the General Assembly for consideration at its sixtieth session.

The General Assembly recalled its several resolutions, including resolution 57/283 B, section II.A, paragraph 9, and reaffirmed that all meetings of Nairobi-based United Nations bodies shall take place in Nairobi, except as otherwise authorized by the General Assembly or the Committee on Conferences acting on its behalf, and requested the Secretary-General to report on the subject to the Assembly at its sixtieth session through the Committee on Conferences. The Assembly strongly discouraged any invitation to host meetings that would violate the headquarters rule, in particular for the United Nations Office at Nairobi and other United Nations centres with a low utilization level. It expressed deep concern over the remaining vacancies in the interpretation and translation services, in particular at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, noted the efforts of the Secretary-General to

fill the vacancies, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to report thereon to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences.

(iv) Improved utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission in Africa

In section II.A, paragraphs 11 to 13, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly noted the improvements in the utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa in response to section II.A, paragraph 1, of its resolution 58/250, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore all possible options to increase further the utilization of the conference centre. It welcomed also the efforts so far undertaken to increase utilization and more efficient use of the conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa, and urged the Secretary-General to sustain the marketing campaign efforts and to report on the outcome to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa establishes and develops linkages with other centres and bodies, introduces and utilizes an integrated conference management system and considers the implementation of other modern technology systems, as appropriate, for a more efficient delivery of services, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

(d) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243, in which it had decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly would meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairpersons of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during the main part of the Assembly submit their requests to the Chairperson of the Committee.

(e) Consideration of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of subsidiary organs of the Economic and Social Council for 2006-2007

The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1998/103 of 5 February 1998, decided to invite the Committee to review the Council's draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings and to submit, as appropriate, its recommendations thereon to the Council. The draft calendar for the biennium 2006-2007, which is to be presented to the Council at its substantive session of 2005 in July, is expected to be available for consideration by the Committee before the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. The Committee may wish to consider meeting at that time in order to discuss the draft and to convey its observations to the Council.

3. Improving the performance of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

(a) Integrated global management

The Committee discussed during its past three substantive sessions the subject of integrating global management in many details and made recommendations that provided guidance for the Secretariat in the implementation of the reform of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. In section II.B, paragraph 9, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly noted the ongoing efforts towards the establishment of the integrated global management system, and decided to consider at its sixtieth session the current outcomes in the light of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on this issue.

(b) Workload standards and performance measures

In section II.B, paragraph 10, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly also noted the establishment by the Secretary-General of a Secretariat task force to conduct a comprehensive study of workload standards and performance measurement and the preliminary findings of the task force, and requested the Secretary-General to pursue the study of workload standards and performance measurement, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, with a view to presenting to the General Assembly a proposal for a comprehensive methodology for performance measurement and management from a full-system perspective, while also paying attention to the specificities of all the official languages and ensuring compliance with resolution 58/250.

(c) Responsibility and accountability system in documents submission

In section II.B, paragraph 11, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly reiterated its request that the Secretary-General develop further effective measures to strengthen the responsibility and accountability system within the Secretariat, including the establishment of an interdepartmental mechanism to monitor the process in order to ensure the timely submission of documents for processing, and that he report comprehensively thereon to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session through the Committee on Conferences.

(d) Provision of summary records

In section II.B, paragraphs 12 to 14, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to pursue the delivery of summary records, a useful and vital tool for Member States, in particular in maintaining the institutional memory of the Organization, in a more efficient and cost-effective manner in full consultation with all the relevant intergovernmental bodies. It also requested the Secretary-General to examine the option of setting a time frame for the publication of summary records, to study the related practical and financial implications and to present a pilot project to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to elaborate on all options, including those set out in paragraphs 59 to 63 of his report, in accordance with legislative mandates, and to present their practical and financial implications to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session through the Committee on Conferences.

(e) Electronic tools and innovative ways and means to provide services to Member States

In section II.B, paragraphs 15 to 17, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to develop further the functions of the Electronic Meetings Planning and Resource Allocation System (e-Meets) as the central tool for managing meetings to cover the entire spectrum of meeting-related activities and to continue its consultations with other duty stations in order to expand its application across duty stations, or to integrate the system into other systems used in such offices. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to implement further the electronic documentation management concept (e-Doc), including the actual electronic transmission of documents through the documentation chain.

The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to enhance the use of printing on demand for parliamentary documentation as a means of improving services provided to Member States, in full compliance with current legislative mandates, on the basis of experience gained and lessons learned, taking fully into account the special needs of developing countries and the views expressed by Member States, to consider the use of printing on demand for publications, and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session through the Committee on Conferences.

4. Translation- and interpretation-related matters

In section IV, paragraphs 2, 4, 5 and 6, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly noted with appreciation the continued practice of holding informational meetings with Member States to consult with them on the improvement of the language services and the intention to establish additional channels for communication on the terminology used and the quality of services rendered, and requested the Secretary-General to organize informational meetings twice a year and in a more appropriate setting, with interpretation provided on an as-available basis. The Assembly reiterated its request that the Secretary-General continue the efforts to explore the use of new technologies, such as computer-assisted translation, remote and off-site translation and speech recognition, in the six official languages so as to enhance further the quality and productivity of the conference services, and to keep the General Assembly informed of the introduction of any other new technology. It expressed its deep concern for the high level of self-revision, and requested the Secretary-General to present a comprehensive report on the matter to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session through the Committee on Conferences. The Assembly reiterates its request to the Secretary-General, in updating the workload standards, to address the question of the appropriate level of self-revision that is consistent with quality in all official languages and to report thereon to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

5. Review of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007: Department for General Assembly and Conference Management

At its 327th meeting, on 12 June 1991, the Committee decided to review the relevant programme narrative of the proposed programme budget for conference services, and to provide its views thereon to the General Assembly.

In light of that decision, the Secretariat will submit to the Committee, for consideration at its substantive session of 2005, the relevant programme narrative of

the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007, Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

6. Information technology

In section V, paragraphs 1 to 3, of resolution A/59/265, the General Assembly noted the progress achieved thus far across duty stations in integrating information technology into management and documentation-processing systems and the global approach to sharing standards, good practices and technological achievements among the conference services at all duty stations. It welcomed efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General at the United Nations Office at Nairobi to include the Office in the sharing of standard, good practices and technological achievements with the other United Nations Offices, consistent with its operational requirements. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to intensify the efforts to strengthen the information technology capacity at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, to redeploy existing resources, as appropriate, to meet emerging priorities and to revert to this issue, as appropriate, in the context of the regular budget for the period 2006-2007.

7. Adoption of the report